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(Washington, D.C.) - Representatives Donna F. Edwards (D-MD), Russ Carnahan (D-MO), and Steve Driehaus (D-OH) today introduced the Green Infrastructure for Clean Water Act of 2009. Green Infrastructure is a stormwater management technique that preserves the natural hydrology of an area to help reduce stormwater runoff from hard surfaces.

Green infrastructure techniques rely on natural systems to absorb and filter stormwater in a way that relies on soil and plant life to remove toxins and recharge ground water supplies. Implementing green infrastructure provides numerous benefits, which include enhancing water resources, protecting the environment, reducing the urban heat island effect, increasing community health, creating green jobs, and saving money through reduced capitol costs.

"Access to clean water is a necessity and must be protected to ensure the future prosperity and well-being of the United States," said Rep. Edwards. "A growing threat to water quality throughout the U.S. is due to polluted stormwater runoff from highly urbanized areas flowing into surface waters without being treated. This is especially for the 4th Congressional District and metropolitan area bordering the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers and ultimately impacting the Chesapeake Bay. If we do not begin to address this problem, water quality gains made over the last forty years will be lost. Green infrastructure is a proven method that can help address this challenge. The Green Infrastructure for Clean Water Act of 2009 is an innovative, environmental and economically cost-effective approach to manage storm water flows and improve water quality throughout the nation. I am proud to be joined by Reps. Carnahan and Driehaus to introduce this important bill."

"We are at a crossroads where as a nation we must commit to developing innovative technology of the future that will create clean-energy jobs right here in America," said Rep. Carnahan.

"In addition to creating clean-energy jobs by investing in 'green' infrastructure we also reduce costs down the road and continue down the path of becoming the world's prominent leader in clean-energy technology. A step closer to solidifying an American clean-energy economy is to enable different regions across the U.S. to develop the best approaches for wastewater treatment as we enhance our aging water infrastructure."

"This legislation will help us move toward a clean-energy economy while producing innovative solutions to serious infrastructure problems. Green infrastructure development will play a critical role in the future of areas such as greater Cincinnati, where the aging infrastructure is no longer adequate. I applaud Representative Edwards for her leadership on this issue and I'm proud to cosponsor this bill," said Rep. Driehaus.

The bill would establish up to five Centers of Excellence for green infrastructure in the United States charged with conducting research on green infrastructure that is relevant to the geographic region in which the center is located, and provide communities with training and technical assistance on how to implement green infrastructure best management practices. The legislation would also provide incentive funding to help communities develop green infrastructure technologies.

Finally, the legislation would require the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to examine how green infrastructure approaches can be incorporated into clean water programs including permitting and enforcement.

An October 2008 study by the National Research Council determined that existing federal stormwater programming relies on ineffective stormwater management and enforcement mechanisms. The study recommends that instead of monitoring individual pollutants from various sources the EPA should instead focus on strategies that reduce solid surfaces and overall storm water flow volume, which can cause pollution as well as physical and biological changes to waterways. Today's legislation seeks to implement these recommendations.

The bill is supported by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), American Rivers, the American Public Works Association (APWA), the Water Environment Federation (WEF), the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), Clean Water Action, and the Association of State and Interstate Water Pollution Control Administrators (ASIWPCA).

The Green Infrastructure for Clean Water Act of 2009 is expected to be referred to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Water Resources & Environment Subcommittee as well as the House Science and Technology Committee on which Edwards and Carnahan serve.

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